



White-tailed Jackrabbit

Nature's Call

An Activity Newsletter for Kids by Utah's Project WILD--Winter 1999



Cottontail Rabbit

What has long ears, strong legs and hops?

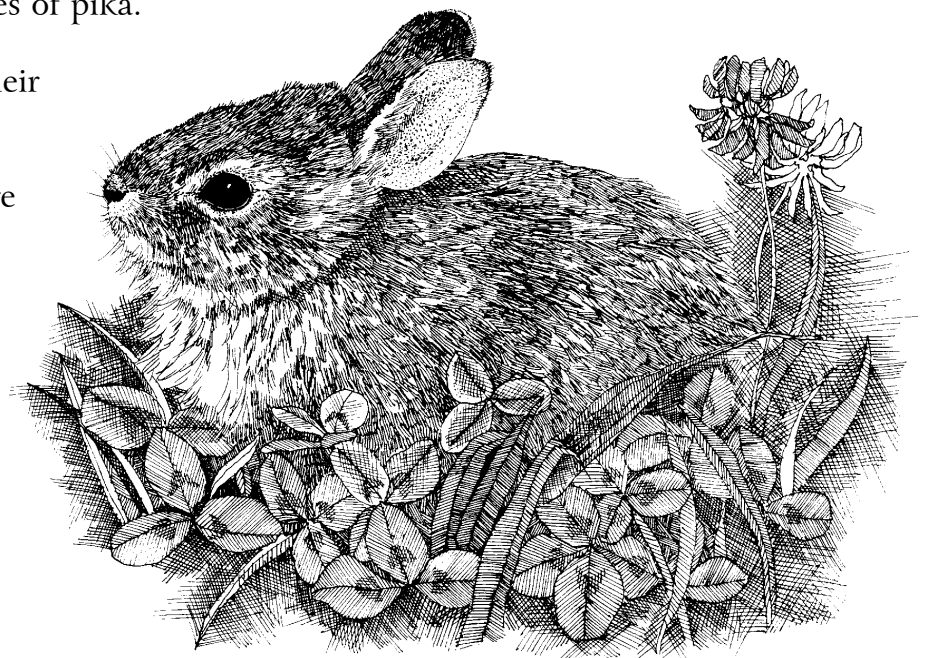
I'm thinking of a Utah animal that has long ears, strong legs, and hops around in its habitat. Can you guess what it is? If you said a rabbit or a hare, you are right! Rabbits and hares are some of our most interesting native wildlife. They belong to a group of animals that scientists refer to as **Lagomorphs**. The word lagomorph comes from the Greek language and means "shaped like a hare." Besides the rabbits and hares, the tiny pikas that are found high in the mountains also belong to the lagomorph group.

Scientists tell us that lagomorphs came to Utah from Europe and Asia over 35 million years ago. Most likely they came here by crossing the Bering land bridge. The Bering land bridge was a dry strip of land that once connected North America and Asia between what is now Alaska and Siberia. These early lagomorphs were much like our modern rabbits. Today, lagomorphs are found in almost every country in the world.

Utah is home to seven different lagomorphs. Three of those are what we consider hares. They are the black-tailed jackrabbit, the white-tailed jackrabbit and the snowshoe hare. Hares are different from rabbits and pikas in several ways. For example, when baby hares are born they have their eyes open and their bodies are covered with fur. Within a few minutes of being born, young hares can hop around with their parents. Rabbit and pika babies are born without fur, and their eyes don't open for several days after birth. They are helpless and need to be taken care of by their mothers. Rabbit mothers prepare a special nest for taking care of the young, and make a soft lining out of their own fur for the nest. Utah is home to three different rabbits (the pygmy rabbit, the desert cottontail and the Nuttall's cottontail) and one species of pika.

Lagomorphs are well adapted to their environments. All are herbivores, meaning they only eat plants, and have very sharp front teeth that are specially adapted for cutting plant stems and eating tree bark. All have relatively large ears that help them hear danger coming, and strong legs that can carry them away at speeds up to 50 miles per hour!

Lagomorphs are amazing animals. We hope you will enjoy learning more about them in this issue of *Nature's Call*.



Cottontail Capers!

The kind of rabbit that most of us know and love is called the cottontail rabbit. Cottontail rabbits have the perfect name because the underside of their tail looks just like a white ball of cotton!

Cottontail rabbits need to be very alert. This is because many animals that are predators often try to capture cottontails. Some of the predators that like to make a meal out of cottontails include raccoons, skunks, snakes, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, weasles, crows, hawks and owls.

To avoid being eaten, cottontail rabbits use their keen ears and large eyes to sense danger. They turn their ears to catch the smallest sounds. And with big eyes on the sides of their head, they can see up, down and all around at the same time.

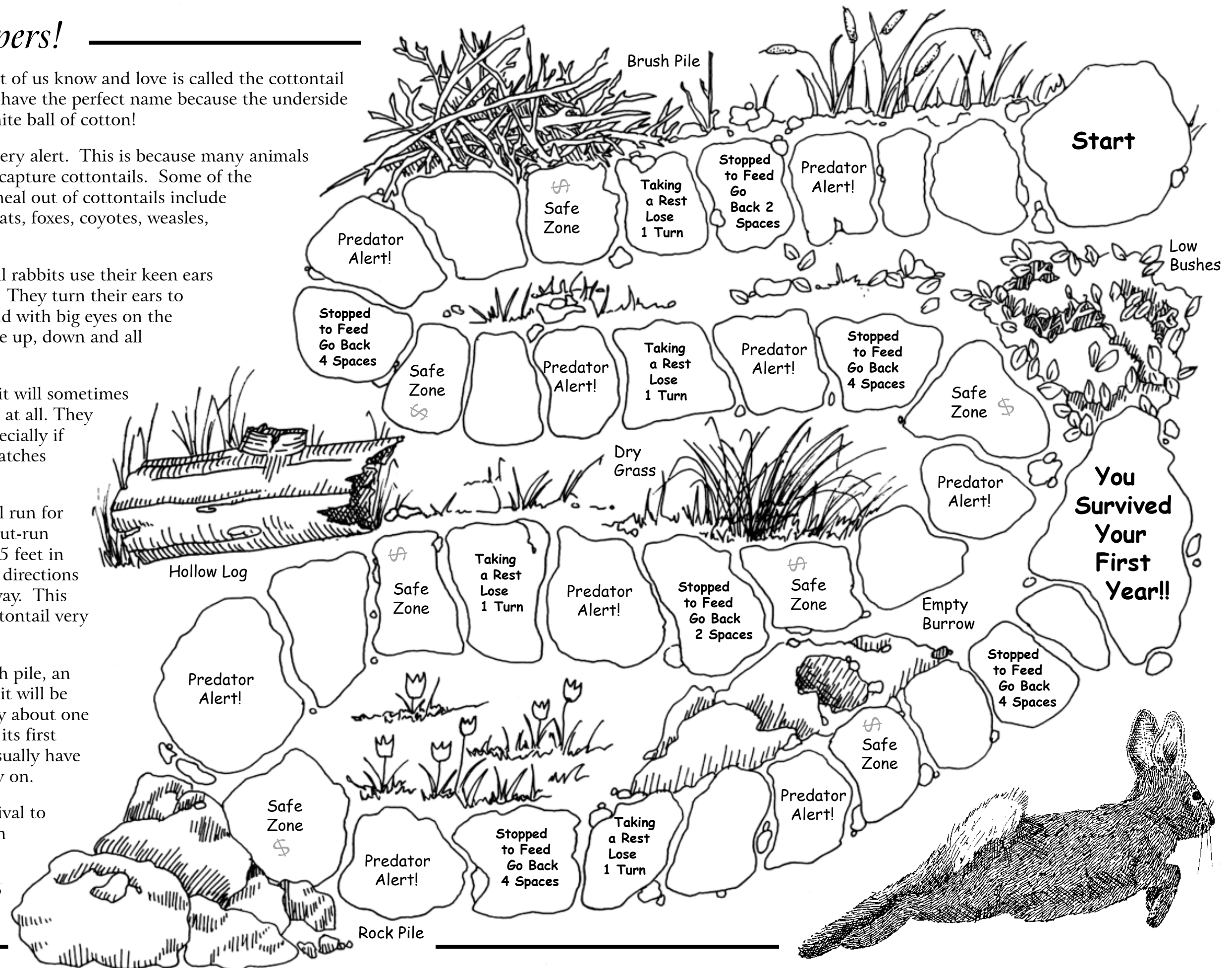
If a cottontail spies an enemy, it will sometimes “freeze” in place and not move at all. They can be very hard to notice, especially if they are sitting in grass that matches the color of their brown fur.

At other times, a cottontail will run for cover. A cottontail can often out-run its chaser because it can leap 15 feet in one bound. It can also change directions again and again as it dashes away. This zigzag hopping can make a cottontail very hard to follow.

If the cottontail reaches a brush pile, an empty burrow or a hollow log, it will be safe... at least for a while. Only about one cottontail in twenty lives until its first birthday. But those that do, usually have lots of little cottontails to carry on.

Play this exciting game of survival to learn if you, as a cottontail, can beat the odds!

(Game directions found on pages 6 and 7 of this issue of Growing WILD.)



Utah Animals

Lagomorph Language!

Over the past 35 million years or so, rabbits have become established in almost every country on earth. Because they are so well known around the world, they have many different names in many different languages. Below are some of the names rabbits are known by. The list on the left is a list of words that all mean “rabbit”. The list on the right is a list of some of the languages spoken in countries around the world. See if you can match the word on the left with the appropriate language on the right by drawing a line that connects the two together. Then, find a location on the map where that language is spoken and label it with the letter. Note: sometimes more than one country speaks the same language. We have done the first one for you. Good Luck!



1. rabbit
2. yah toi
3. janis
4. das kaninchen
5. le lapin
6. arnab
7. kanin
8. conejo
9. sungura
10. cwingen (pronounced “kooningen”)
11. lagos
12. krolik
13. toki (pronounced “toe key”)
14. tho
15. usagi

- A. German
- B. Welsh
- C. Japanese
- D. Spanish
- E. Vietnamese
- F. Norwegian
- G. Greek (classical)
- H. English
- I. Iraqi
- J. Finnish
- K. Cantonese
- L. French
- M. Korean
- N. Kiswahili
- O. Russian

Answers: 1) H; 2) K; 3) J; 4) A; 5) L; 6) I; 7) F; 8) D; 9) N; 10) B; 11) G; 12) O; 13) M; 14) E; 15) C.